

Risks

TUC 

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MAGAZINE

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Risks is the TUC's weekly online bulletin for safety reps and others, read each week by over 16,000 subscribers and 1,500 on the TUC website. To receive this bulletin every week, click [here](#). Past issues are [available](#). This edition contains [Useful links](#) [TUC courses for safety reps](#) [Disclaimer and Privacy](#)

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'Disgraceful' CPS failure on Lloyd killing

Journalists' union NUJ has said it is appalled by a decision from the Crown Prosecution Service not to proceed with a prosecution over the shooting of ITN journalist Terry Lloyd in Iraq in 2003. A 2006 inquest into Terry's death found that he was killed by a bullet to the head from an M63 machine gun fired by US Marines. The NUJ was strongly critical of the US authorities at the time of the inquest and "the contempt they showed for the British legal process." They failed to co-operate with the inquest, refusing to send witnesses and editing video material of the shooting, the union said. Announcing the decision to take no action, head of the counter terrorism division at CPS, Sue Hemming, said: "There is insufficient evidence at the current time to establish to the criminal standard the identity of the person who fired the bullet that killed Mr Lloyd. There is also insufficient evidence in relation to the chain of command to establish if there was any person responsible for the chain of events that led to the death of Mr Lloyd." NUJ general secretary Jeremy Dear said: "The CPS should be ashamed of itself for backing away from this issue so completely. To suggest that Mr Lloyd was in some way responsible for his own situation by not wearing a helmet or bullet proof vest is insulting. He had received injuries from both Iraqi and American bullets but the fatal shot came from an American soldier whilst Terry was being transported in a makeshift ambulance." Mr Dear concluded: "Terry was killed because he was trying to do his job. The CPS has failed to secure justice for Terry, his family or his colleagues. It's disgraceful that the CPS has shied away from taking in action in this case."

- [NUJ news release](#). [CPS news release](#).

Photographer's death must be investigated

The NUJ has written to South African president Thabo Mbeki calling on him to push for a full investigation into the death of an award-winning UK photojournalist in Zimbabwe. Richard Mills, who was on assignment for the Times, was found dead in his hotel room on 14 July. His family has disputed the claim by Zimbabwean authorities that his death was due to suicide. The NUJ is concerned that Richard's death could have been linked to his work and has called for a full investigation. The NUJ's president, James Doherty, wrote to President Mbeki to call on him to raise the case with the Zimbabwe authorities. The letter said: "The National Union of Journalists wishes to draw to your attention our concern at the suspicious circumstances surrounding the death of our member Richard Mills." It added: "Richard was in good mental and physical health and had been planning to return to the United Kingdom on 15 July 2008. In email correspondence to his wife Zoe he indicated that he was looking forward to moving to their new home in Scotland and was looking forward to see his five-year old son Finn... He was working on an undercover assignment in Zimbabwe and, on the day he died, had interviewed a white farmer who was attacked after speaking out against Robert Mugabe. In these circumstances Richard's family do not accept the claim by the Zimbabwean authorities that his death was caused by suicide." The call for an investigation was backed by the global journalists' union federation

IFJ. General secretary Aidan White said: "We share the deep suspicion of Richard Mill's family over the circumstances of the death of this gifted colleague. It casts a fresh shadow over the crisis for democracy in Zimbabwe."

- [NUJ news release](#). [IFJ news release](#).
- Zimbabwe crisis: [Support Lovemore Matombo and Wellington Chibebe](#), [Zimbabwean trade unionists on trial](#), [New ITUC solidarity website](#).

Grieving family want manslaughter charges

The family of a GMB member killed by a mechanical digger when depositing grass cuttings at a Newbury recycling centre have said the firm responsible should face manslaughter charges. In a statement, Linda Krauesslar and her daughter Victoria called on the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to prosecute Biffa for manslaughter. Dennis Krauesslar, 59, was killed on 10 September 2007. A Biffa employee was using the digger to clear waste in a pit and brought the shovel down on Mr Krauesslar who had been emptying garden waste, crushing him against the pit's wall. He died later in hospital. During an inquest last week the Krauesslar family's legal representative tried to introduce evidence from an HSE report detailing previous 'near misses' and safety failings at the site. Berkshire coroner Peter Bedford ruled the information inadmissible and it was not put before the jury. After hearing legal submissions from all the interested parties, he also ruled that the jury could not consider a verdict of unlawful killing.

Afterwards Mr Krauesslar's widow Linda said: "In my opinion Biffa should face manslaughter charges." The inquest jury's narrative verdict did highlight serious safety flaws in Biffa's operation at the site. It said factors contributing to the death included a lack of site staff and signage to warn members of the public, the digger driver's possible lack of visibility, no formal safety systems in place for when the digger was being used and a lack of risk reporting between Biffa staff. Biffa has admitted liability for Dennis Krauesslar's death. Commenting after the inquest, Linda Krauesslar said: "We have always been unhappy that the driver himself was not prosecuted, but ultimately it was his employer's responsibility to ensure that he was properly trained in the use of the vehicle. It was Biffa's inadequate systems that put the public in danger and killed a loving and devoted husband and father and therefore Biffa should face manslaughter charges."

- [Thompsons Solicitors news release](#). [Newbury Today](#).

Union is sick of Royal Mail practices

A flagship Royal Mail office is misusing security systems to help track worker attendance in order to dismiss employees and increase profit, the union Unite has charged. The union is angered by statements to the press made by Mike Sibley, head of operations at the company's Heathrow Worldwide Distribution Centre (HWDC) in Berkshire. In recent press coverage he is reported as saying: "Royal Mail has a check in/check out system installed for security reasons. This allows us to keep track of people's absences and spot patterns."

Sometimes, showing a worker proof of an absence pattern is enough to change behaviour. When that isn't enough, dismissal can become the only option." Unite says this approach has resulted in low staff morale, high turnover of staff and volatile employee relations. It says the "simple minded" strategy ignores the contribution to absenteeism of factors including inadequate health and safety, poor working conditions and a lack of effective staff involvement and participation. Unite national officer Paul Reuter commented: "The statement made recently in the national press by one of the senior managers at HWDC highlights the draconian and dictatorial approach being adopted by Royal Mail. They would be better suited in involving their staff and engaging with the trade unions to help resolve these issues." The union says HWDC has an attrition rate of two to three staff a week, with the firm's own employee opinion surveys showing consistently that over one in five complain of being bullied or harassed.

- [Unite news release](#).

Site union gets casual work commitment

Construction union UCATT has said a blueprint to tackle casualisation in the building industry has been agreed a Labour's policy review. The union says it was able to persuade the government at the National Policy Forum meeting in Warwick last weekend that "issues such as soaring death rates, endemic casualisation and a low levels of skills training must be addressed." Alan Ritchie, general secretary of UCATT, said: "Significant progress was made at Warwick. The government now accepts that the construction industry is a special case. Once the proposals are finalised and enacted, there will be the genuine prospect of creating a robust industry fit for the challenges of the 21st century." Rumours that the government has agreed to UCATT's demand that the Gangmasters Licensing Authority scope be extended to the construction sector caused alarm in the recruitment industry. Tom Hadley, director of external relations with the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC), said: "The REC is keen to ensure that construction recruitment agencies work to the highest standards. But with the enforcement of employment agency rules just being overhauled, it would be foolish to look to new solutions before the impact of the current changes has even been felt." REC said the recruitment industry is concerned that extending licensing "would just add extra cost to legitimate agencies whilst ignoring the minority of rogue operators who break all the rules."

- [UCATT news release](#). [REC news release](#).

STUC project tackles violence

A groundbreaking STUC-inspired project to tackle workplace violence has been showcased at the July National Hazards Conference. Four years ago, the Scottish union federation worked with Scotland's then Labour administration on a report that STUC said "set the foundation for positive collaboration between the trade union movement in Scotland and the Scottish government to raise

awareness of the extent of the problem and how to help unions, workers and employers address the issue." STUC said one of the most successful aspects of the campaign "has been the media profile with poster and television advertising funded by the Scottish government ensuring the message that physical and verbal attacks on public service workers is unacceptable was widely communicated across Scotland." It added: "The emphasis of the work has primarily focused on prevention, ensuring employers and trade unions identify opportunities to work together to identify and address issues within their own working environments."

- [STUC news release](#) and project presentation [[powerpoint](#)].

Tube staff attacked at attack sacking protest

A man was arrested by plain clothes police following an attack on striking station attendants protesting at the victimisation of a colleague after he suffered a violent attack at work. Around 100 RMT members at Elephant and Castle, Charing Cross and Lambeth North Tube stations took 24 hour action on 28 July to demand the reinstatement of Jerome Bowes, dismissed after defending himself against a violent assault on New Year's Eve. At around 6.30am on the morning of the action a man approached the picket line and punched one of the pickets in the face and attacked RMT president John Leach with a traffic cone. The incident was witnessed by two plain clothes police officers who were driving past. They stopped and followed the man down onto the station platform where he was arrested. RMT member Joe Thompson was left with a bloody nose and split lip. He said: "After what happened to Jerome I was afraid to defend myself as I have people at home depending on my wages." RMT said station assistant Jerome Bowes was sacked for defending himself against the assault from a member of the public who had already been involved in a fight on Elephant and Castle station. "Jerome Bowes was sacked for defending himself and now another member of staff has been attacked while defending his workmate," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said. "Staff have to face these kind of assaults every day, London Underground should be defending their workforce not victimising them."

- [RMT news release](#).

Overweight firefighter gets his job back

A firefighter sacked for being overweight has been reinstated after a campaign by his union, FBU. Talks between the union and Grampian Fire and Rescue Service brokered by mediator Acas also averted a possible strike. Kevin Ogilvie, 46, a 22 year veteran of the fire service, was dismissed after failing an annual fitness test. His employer said it had been forced to act after a "very long and arduous process of support and consideration." However, this week FBU and the Grampian Fire and Rescue Service said in a joint statement they had reached a "compromise agreement." Mr Ogilvie could return to work subject to "strict criteria", they said, but refused to comment on what these were. The FBU had earlier agreed to ballot its members for a walk-out over the case, but has

now withdrawn the strike ballot. The union had argued that an alternative role could have been found within the service for Mr Ogilvie. The joint statement said: "At a meeting with Acas, it was agreed that Grampian Fire and Rescue Service would continue the employment of the firefighter subject to agreed strict criteria which will be closely monitored by both parties." They thanked Acas for helping prevent the situation escalating into "a very damaging dispute." The statement also said: "The issue of appeals to the Joint Fire Board on dismissals for all future cases will be formally raised at the September Board meeting by the FBU."

- [The Herald](#). [BBC News Online](#).

Other news

Campaigners reject work health blueprint

A government approved strategy on work and health is destined to fail, health and safety campaigners have warned. Delegates to the July National Hazards Conference approved unanimously a statement highly critical of Dame Carol Black's 'Working for a healthier tomorrow' report, launched in March. The Dame is the government's first workplace health 'czar'. The Hazards Campaign conference, attended by over 500 safety reps, union officials and workplace health campaigners, echoed a TUC response to the report that said the best way to improve workplace health is to prevent workplace accidents and illnesses, and that improvements would require better rights for safety reps and more and better resources for rehabilitation and health and safety enforcement. The campaign said it "would expect a good occupational health strategy to prioritise the prevention of work related ill health and establish an adequately funded, worker centred occupational health strategy and service free of charge to workers. Such a strategy would give full recognition to, and enforcement of, existing safety representatives' rights and would allow safety representatives to participate fully in all aspects of health and safety in the workplace. It would give more resources to the Health and Safety Executive and local authority enforcement to provide more preventive enforcement with higher penalties for breaches in health and safety legislation and it would recognise that breaches of health and safety laws are criminal offences which should be properly enforced and resourced as other areas of the criminal justice system." The conference resolution said Dame Carol's report "is an ideological document with no reference to occupational diseases and bears no resemblance to the realities of working life in Britain today. It is a tool for driving workers back to work taking no account of the causes of their ill health and will not deliver a healthier tomorrow for workers."

- [Hazards Campaign statement and conference motion](#). [Workplace health czar website](#).

Firms fined for fatal cradle plunge

Two firms involved in a workplace tragedy in Sheffield which killed one man and injured three others have been fined a total of

£140,000. The incident happened when an access cradle suspended from the exterior of a Sheffield office building partially collapsed in July 2003. Apollo Cradles of Barnsley was found guilty of breaching health and safety law in June and was this week fined £115,000 plus £45,000 costs at Sheffield Crown Court. Bradway Construction Ltd earlier pleaded guilty to breaching health and safety law and was fined £25,000 plus £18,000 costs. Four men, all employees of Bradway Construction Ltd, were using a suspended access cradle provided by Apollo Cradles Ltd to work on the maintenance and painting of an office building on 3 July 2003, when the cradle failed causing them to fall from a height of 10 metres. Painter Tony Bottomley was killed and Peter Wilson, Dale Howard and Anthony Glossop were all seriously injured. Health and Safety Executive principal inspector Dave Redman said: "This is a tragic case involving four men who had never worked in a suspended access cradle before. The incident could have been avoided had Apollo Cradles Ltd ensured that the equipment it was providing was safe and fit for use." He said: "Added to this, the workers were required by their employers, Bradway Construction Ltd, to carry out painting and maintenance at height in a cradle without any training or instruction as to its safe use. This is unacceptable in this day and age - all workers have a right to expect to be trained on how to use the equipment they are working with, and there is plenty of advice and guidance available to employers in the construction industry to help them meet their legal obligations."

- [HSE news release](#). [Sheffield Star](#). [Contract Journal](#). [Building](#).

Firm fined £5,000 for tree felling injury

A Sutton Coldfield engineering company has been fined £5,000 after a man suffered serious head injuries while he was helping to remove a branch from a tree. Pro-Mil Engineering Ltd was also ordered to pay costs of £3,314 at Nuneaton Magistrates' Court after pleading guilty to a safety offence. The case followed an HSE investigation into an incident on 24 July 2007 at the company premises, during the removal of a willow tree that was leaning over the boundary fence. As the tree was felled the trunk twisted, putting tension on a supporting rope, catapulting the tree across the yard. It struck a 42-year-old employee on the side of the head with some force. He suffered serious injuries and was in intensive care for about three weeks. Speaking after the case, HSE investigating inspector Neil Craig said: "Neither the injured man, nor any of his colleagues who assisted, had been formally trained for any aspect of the task or held a relevant certificate of competence in the use of chainsaws for felling trees. They were simply asked to assist during a break in their normal work. The company had also failed to do a risk assessment of the task of removing trees." The inspector added: "As a result of the company's failure to take basic precautions, a man suffered severe head injuries, which were initially considered to be life-threatening, and his colleagues were also put at risk. This was entirely preventable."

- [HSE news release](#).

Acoustics firm didn't listen to lessons

A Lancashire manufacturing firm has been fined £4,000 after two separate incidents in which employees were injured. Janesville Acoustics Ltd of Colne pleaded guilty at Reedley Magistrates' Court to four charges resulting from the two incidents. It was also ordered to pay costs of £3,000. In July 2006 an employee was changing a plastic bag on a dust extraction system, when he slipped and his arm became trapped in an unguarded part of the machine, causing crush injuries to his hand. Then in January 2007 an employee was using his hand to evenly distribute resin in a hopper when a rotating agitator came into contact with his hand, causing a finger injury that required surgery. The company was fined for breaches of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Health and Safety Executive inspector Sheldon Taylor commented: "These were entirely preventable incidents had the machines being properly guarded. While the injuries on this occasion were not serious, the consequences could have been far worse. Companies have a responsibility for the health and safety of their employees which includes carrying out proper risk assessments and machines being guarded."

- [HSE news release](#) and [work equipment](#) and [risk assessment](#) webpages.

Browne's BP blast ignorance revealed

It took more than a year for a dogged Texan lawyer, Brent Coon, to get the former BP boss Lord Browne to answer questions on the legal record about the Texas City oil disaster. According to Andrew Clark's 25 July 'On America' column in The Guardian, it turns out that the noble lord's knowledge of the tragedy was fuzzy, to say the least. A transcript was made public last week of an hour-long deposition given by Browne about the 2005 tragedy at BP's Texas City refinery in which a group of exhausted labourers overfilled a dilapidated vertical drum with chemicals, causing an explosion which showered burning liquid over accommodation trailers nearby. "The most common phrase in the 76-page deposition?", writes Clark. "It's a toss-up between 'I was not aware' and 'I don't recall'." The fire, which killed 15 people and was America's worst industrial accident for a generation, took place on Browne's watch. While Browne was still in post, a US Chemical Safety Board investigation report concluded there were "organisational and safety deficiencies at all levels of BP corporation." But Browne never bothered to read the report. In his deposition, he told Coon that its contents had been "described to me in a meeting", adding: "It was very, very long, I believe." According to Clark, "it's clear that Browne has little grasp of the contents." When Coon asked him if he was aware that BP had been overworking staff at Texas City, Browne replied: "I wasn't aware of that at all." Coon pressed on: "You were not aware that the person charged with operating the gauges that day had worked 30 days consecutively, 12 hours or longer shifts?" Browne answered: "No, I wasn't aware of that." The Guardian's Andrew Clark comments: "He obviously wasn't reading daily newspapers either – because The Times and The Guardian both reported this fairly crucial detail." The details will also be familiar to Risks readers, who have been provided coverage a succession of reports on the failings of the London-based BP global board and the anger of those affected by the company's negligence. It was Browne's cost

cutting strategy that made him the shareholders' darling, but also led to reduced staffing and longer hours across BP's refinery operations.

- [Transcript of Lord John Browne deposition \[pdf\]](#). [Brent Coon Texas City Explosion website and court documents](#). [The Guardian](#). [Find out more about BP's deadly neglect](#).

Teenage exposure led to asbestos death

The family of a man who died from an asbestos related disease are searching for information about the now defunct Bedfordshire business where he was exposed to the deadly fibre. Leigh Boniface from Bradford on Avon in Wiltshire died aged 48 from the asbestos cancer mesothelioma. Leigh was exposed to asbestos while working for Porch Watt Developments Company Limited, between 1974 and 1975. He was just 18-years-old at the time. He worked demolishing 1920s terraced houses in Paddington in London where he was exposed to the asbestos that lined old boilers, fireplaces and guttering. He was diagnosed with mesothelioma in April 2005 and died just 10 weeks later. His wife Jacqueline is pursuing compensation, however Porch Watt Developments Company went into receivership in 1993. Jacqueline's lawyers, Thompsons Solicitors, are trying to work out which insurance firm provided the company's employers' liability insurance at the time, information crucial to settling a claim. Jacqueline said: "It is important to the family to pursue compensation so we can obtain justice for Leigh who died as a result of this deadly dust. This appeal is our last chance." Gill Owen of Thompsons Solicitors said: "In order to pursue this claim we must find out who insured Porch Watt Development Limited. We would urge anyone who has any information about the company to get in touch with us so Mrs Boniface and her family can pursue this case."

- [Thompsons Solicitors news release](#). If you have any information about Porch Watt Development Limited, email [Gill Owen](#) or call on 0161 819 3500.

Workplaces hit by the summertime blues

More than half the UK workforce suffers from the summertime blues, a government agency has said. A Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) poll found 58 per cent of workers suffer from 'Summer Seasonal Affective Disorder' which leaves many demotivated, unhappy and even close to quitting their jobs. It revealed 39 per cent of office workers believe Summer Seasonal Affective Disorder, or 'Summer SAD', detracts from their motivation to work, while 8 per cent said they are more likely to call in sick during the summer months. TDA chief executive Graham Holley said the survey illustrated another benefit of a teaching career. "A teacher's work is immensely rewarding - there's no other job like it - but it is undeniably hard work during term-time. The six-week summer break is a well-deserved benefit offering time for relaxation as well as time to catch up. There are legions of people who could benefit not only from a competitive salary plus the unbeatable rewards of working with children, but also time in the summer

months to recharge their batteries away from the work environment." However, TDA was rapped this week by the Advertising Standards Authority for making inflated claims on teachers' salaries in a TV advert. Barry Fawcett of the National Union of Teachers said the advert, which has now been banned by ASA, was another example of the government's attempts to mask its public sector pay policy which had resulted in below inflation pay increases for teachers since 2005.

- [TDA news release](#) and [response to the ASA ruling](#). [Personnel Today](#). [BBC News Online](#).

International News

Global: Olympics must get it right by London

The sporting goods industry, making a fortune from Olympic branded products, is doing this on the back of increasing exploitation of its global workforce, a top union leader has said. "Four years on from the Athens Olympics, workers in the sporting goods industry are paid less in real terms, work longer, have less job security and suffer more repression when they try to organise," said Neil Kearney, general secretary of the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF). Speaking this week in Hong Kong, he said the industry "needs to embark on positive action to ensure that workers in the sector are free to unionise and to bargain collectively." He added: "This could best be done by the sporting goods brands insisting that each of their suppliers give a 'right to unionise guarantee' to every employee and agree 'right to access' agreements with all relevant trade unions interested in promoting and supporting worker organisation." The global union federation leader concluded: "For the past eight years trade unions and NGOs [non-governmental organisations] have engaged in dialogue with the sporting goods industry. This jaw/jaw approach has produced limited results. The time has come for unions to sharpen their teeth and insist that the industry is fully cleaned up by the London Olympics in 2012. Rest assured, trade unions will not permit the industry to forget these obligations nor will labour conditions in the sector be permitted to remain unchanged four years from now!" ITGLWF is one of the founders of the Play Fair 2008 campaign, pressing for decent employment rights and safe work for workers producing Olympic branded goods for the Beijing Olympics, which start next week.

- [ITGLWF news release](#). [Full text of Neil Kearney's speech](#). [Play Fair 2008](#).

Peru: Chinese owner in mine disease denial

Workers in a Chinese owned mine in Peru are developing deadly dust diseases – but the Chinese metal giant is denying the cases exist. The workers at Shougang Corp's iron ore mine in Peru have pneumoconiosis, a debilitating and potentially fatal lung scarring caused by dust inhalation. Peruvian regulations require mining companies to give every worker an annual medical exam. If any lung disease is detected, regardless of what caused it, the company must transfer the sick worker to a risk-free job. However, despite

workers being hospitalised with the condition, Daniel Vargas, Shougang's medical services director at the mine in San Juan de Marcona, said: "We don't have this kind of problem." Peru's mining regulator, the Energy and Mining Investment Supervising Agency, or Osinergmin, says something quite different. An inspection in June 2006 found 110 of 889 Shougang workers, or 12 per cent, had pneumoconiosis. The agency fined Shougang 147,000 soles (over £20,000), saying the company violated regulations by allowing sick people to work in its mines and processing plants. The Peruvian unit of Beijing-based Shougang, China's seventh-largest steelmaker, responded to the Peru regulators by disagreeing with their medical findings. Shougang told the agency in writing it knew of just one case of pneumoconiosis at the time. Julio Ortiz, the secretary general of the Shougang Hierro Peru SAA Mine Workers' Union, said Shougang routinely lies to workers about their health. "They do everything they can to deny we are sick," he said. Ortiz, 46, was diagnosed by a government doctor with early-stage pneumoconiosis in 2002. "They can lie and say no one is sick, but everyone who gets this disease and fights for their rights has their illness confirmed by the government. This is how we show the big lie."

- Bloomberg.com.

USA: Prison labour exposed to deadly toxins

US federal health officials have found staff and inmates had no protection against exposure to high levels of lead and cadmium in a prison industry computer recycling plant. The amount of health damage or risk could not be assessed because the Elkton Federal Correctional Institution in eastern Ohio did not conduct medical monitoring or industrial hygiene surveillance. However, a July 2008 report from the government's National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) reveals staff and inmates were exposed to concentrations of lead and cadmium far above permissible limits in Elkton's industry computer recycling plant. The plant was shut down in June, seven months after the excessive levels were observed by NIOSH. It found "there was no respiratory protection used or any type of engineering control in place to minimise exposures" and there was no medical monitoring of inmates or staff. While recent recycling operations have improved, lead and cadmium dust is still migrating out of the factory into "inmate housing and staff vehicles." Jeff Ruch, executive director of PEER, the organisation that first warned of recycling hazards in prisons, commented: "Prison industry managers have exhibited what can only be called callous indifference to the health of their own staff, their families and the inmates within their charge. We are still waiting for the Justice Department, which is responsible for federal prisons, to take appropriate action."

- [PEER news release](#). Full NIOSH report [[pdf](#)]. AFGE statement [[pdf](#)].

USA: \$5m fine after 13 die in sugar blast

The US safety watchdog OSHA last week issued 120 citations for safety violations at the Imperial Sugar Co plant in Port Wentworth,

Georgia, where incredibly high levels of sugar dust fuelled an explosion on 7 February that killed 13 workers. Dozens of other workers suffered serious injuries, and three remain hospitalised, two in critical condition. Along with the citations, OSHA issued \$5 million (approx. £2.5m) in fines for the violations at Port Wentworth. The same day, OSHA issued \$3.7 million in fines for 91 similar violations at Imperial's plant in Gramercy, Louisiana. OSHA found that 61 of the Port Wentworth violations were "wilful" and "egregious," as were 47 at the Gramercy facility. Workplace safety experts, however, have questioned OSHA's lack of action on a legally-binding dust standard and the lack of inspections that allowed such huge quantities of explosive dust to accumulate. More than 130 workers have been killed and hundreds more seriously injured in combustible dust explosions in the United States since 1980. Two years ago, the US Chemical Safety Board (CSB) urged OSHA to adopt combustible dust standards. But the Bush administration's OSHA has not moved on a rule to set dust level standards. Instead, OSHA is relying on corporations to voluntarily police themselves. In April, the House of Representatives passed legislation to force OSHA to set a combustible dust standard. The bill is before the Senate, but President Bush, with the backing of the sugar industry, has issued a veto threat.

- [AFL-CIO Now](#). [New York Times](#).

Resources

Usdaw's hot work warning

Retail and food union Usdaw has issued a seasonal warning on the health risks posed by hot work. The union alert spells out the legal position and the health effects of work in excessive temperatures - sweating, irritability, nausea, headaches, dizziness, fainting, muscle cramps, extra strain on the heart and ultimately heat stroke. Being overheated can also affect your concentration, putting you at greater risks of 'accidents'. And sweaty hands aren't in optimum condition for handling tools or loads.

- [Usdaw alert](#) and [temperature at work guidance](#).

Events and Courses

Workplace bullying conference, Midlands, 15 November 2008

The UK National Work Stress Network is holding a conference on eradicating workplace bullying, including cyberbullying, on Saturday 15 November and Sunday 16 November 2008. The event will take place at the Hillscourt Conference Centre, near Birmingham.

- Further details from the [UK National Work Stress Network](#). Conference booking form [[word](#)].

TUC courses for safety reps

COURSES FOR SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2008

- [Northern](#), [North West](#), [Southern & Eastern](#), [Yorkshire & Humber](#), [South West](#), [Midlands](#), [Scotland](#), [Wales](#)

Useful Links

- Visit the TUC www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s website pages on health and safety. See what's on offer from TUC Publications and What's On in health and safety.
- Subscribe to [Hazards magazine](#), supported by the TUC as a key source of information for union safety reps.
- What's new in the [HSC/E](#) and the [European Agency](#).
- [HSE Books](#), PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA. Tel: 01787 881165; fax: 01787 313995